

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2429

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USUN NEW YORK 02791

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORG, MARR, UNSC, IS, LE

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN LEBANON

REF: USUN 2714

1. AMBASSADOR LEONARD AND POLMIN SPENT HOUR AND HALF WITH JAMES JONAH OF URQHART'S STAFF LATE JULY 3. MOST OF THE TIME WAS SPENT IN DETAILED DEBRIEFING REFLECTING JONAH'S FINDINGS FROM HIS RECENT VISIT TO LEBANON. LEONARD ALSO SOUGHT JONAH'S VIEWS ABOUT THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT AND POSSIBLE STEPS WE AND UN MIGHT TAKE TO HEAD OFF TOTAL CHAOS.

2. CONCERNING SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION, JONAH DESCRIBED RESULTS OF HIS INVESTIGATIONS IN THREE SUBJECT AREAS CHARGED TO HIM BY THE SYG: A) PROBLEM OF INFILTRATION, WHICH HAD PROMPTED VARIOUS CONCERNS AMONG ISRAELIS, PHALANGISTS AND THE PLO; B) PROCEDURES FOR SUPPLYING ARMED PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON; AND C) UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT IN SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. ON INFILTRATION, JONAH
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SAID UNIFIL PROCEDURES PRESENTLY IN FORCE ARE STRINGENT AND SATISFACTORY. SURVEILLANCE IS CONDUCTED DAY AND NIGHT, BY VEHICLES AND FOOT PATROLS, FROM SET OBSERVATION POSTS, AND AT THE CHECK-POINTS. AT THE CHECK-POINTS UNIFIL COMMANDERS CONDUCT SEARCHES AND CHECK IDENTIFICATION PAPERS OF ALL PASSING THROUGH, TURNING BACK THOSE NOT PROPERLY IDENTIFIED OR CARRYING ARMS. THE PROCEDURES

NOW ARE UNIFORM IN ALL BATTALION AREAS. MOST COMMANDERS INDICATED TO JONAH THAT THE GREATEST PROBLEMS WITH INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS ARE IN THE SENEGAL AREA ASTRIDE THE MAIN ROAD FROM TYRE, BUT EVEN THERE THE SENEGALESE COMMANDER HAS INSTITUTED AN INFORMAL CURFEW AND EVEN ASKED FOR AUTHORITY TO SHOOT AT NIGHT IN AN EFFORT TO ENFORCE THE RULES, PERMISSION THAT WAS NOT YET GRANTED BY UNIFIL. IN ALL AREAS THE PRINCIPAL PROBLEM IS THE LACK OF A MANDATE TO STOP PASSAGE OF UNARMED CIVILIANS, AND THE CONSEQUENT POSSIBILITY OF CIVILIANS INFILTRATING TO HIDDEN ARMS CACHES. THIS POSSIBILITY DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE DEVELOPED ON ANY LARGE SCALE, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO WELL-INFORMED LOCAL SOURCES SUCH AS MUKHTARS.

3. CONCERNING THE SUPPLY PROBLEM, JONAH SAID THEY HAVE BEEN DEALING WITH UNCERTAIN NUMBERS DESCRIBING THOSE PALESTINIANS WHO HAVE REMAINED IN THE UNIFIL AREA SINCE BEFORE THE ISRAELI INCURSION AND THOSE WHO HAVE RETURNED TO THE AREA SINCE UNIFIL ESTABLISHED. HE SAID THAT ON JUNE 12 THE PLO GAVE ESPINASSI AN OVERLAY SHOWING CURRENT PLO LOCATIONS, BUT THE INFORMATION WAS NOT TRANSMITTED TO UNIFIL OR UNNY HEADQUARTERS UNTIL JUNE 22, A PUZZLING FACT CURRENTLY UNDER INVESTIGATION WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT DISCIPLINARY ACTION MAY BE CALLED FOR. JONAH SAID THAT, WHEREAS ARAFAT HAD CLAIMED TWO BATTALIONS OF PALESTINIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON, JONAH WAS ABLE TO

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IDENTIFY ONLY 190-200 IN THE COURSE OF HIS VISIT TO ALL BATTALION AREAS, WHEN HE EXHAUSTIVELY QUESTIONED ALL AUTHORITIES. JONAH SAID HE THEREFORE TOLD ARAFAT THAT 190 WOULD BE USED AS THE BASE FIGURE TO DETERMINE THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS AUTHORIZED TO BE IN THE AREA, AND EVERY SINGLE PALESTINIAN OVER THAT NUMBER WOULD BE EJECTED. ARAFAT SAID THE ISRAELIS, WHO CLAIM A LARGER NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN THE AREA, HAVE BETTER INTELLIGENCE, BUT JONAH TOLD ARAFAT THAT THE 190 FIGURE WOULD STAND. THE UN THEREFORE IS LIMITING SUPPLIES TO FIT THE ACTUAL COUNTER NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS SCATTERED THROUGH THE UNIFIL AREA. HE ALSO TOLD ARAFAT THAT CURRENT GROUPINGS OF PALESTINIANS WOULD BE CONFINED TO THEIR PRESENT AREAS, AND IF ANY PALESTINIANS DRIFT AWAY-- BECAUSE OF THE SHORTAGE OF SUPPLIES AND GENERALLY MISERABLE CONDITIONS IN MANY OF THEIR LOCATIONS, -- THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR ENCAMPMENTS BUT WOULD BE EJECTED FROM THE UNIFIL AREA. SUPPLIES, USUALLY PROVIDED BY TWO CIVILIANS IN A SINGLE TRUCK FOR EACH LOCATION, ARE NOW LIMITED TO ONE DELIVERY A DAY, INSTEAD OF TWO AS WAS THE CASE IN SOME AREAS. JONAH REVIEWED THE DETAILED FIGURES AND LOCATIONS OF SMALL GROUPS OF

PALESTINIANS AND THE CONSCIENTIOUS EFFORTS OF THE COMMANDERS TO CONTROL THEM. HE SAID THE LARGEST CONCENTRATION TOTALLING ABOUT 100 WAS IN THE FRENCH AREA, ALONG THE ROAD FROM TYRE. ARAFAT OBJECTED TO THE RULE AGAINST PALESTINIANS MOVING OUT OF THEIR LOCATIONS. JONAH SAID UNIFIL IS CONSIDERING ESTABLISHING FREE-FIRE ZONE ACROSS THE ENTIRE AREA EAST-WEST JUST NORTH OF THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES. ARAFAT ASKED JONAH TO LET THE PLO KNOW IN ADVANCE OF ENFORCING

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ANY FREE-FIRE ZONE.

4. CONCERNING DEPLOYMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN AREAS, JONAH PROVIDED DETAILED FIGURES ON THE HADDAD/SHIDIAC FORCES IN THE AREA AND SAID THEY FULLY CONTROL THE ENTIRE SOUTHERN AREA. UNIFIL PRESENCE IS ONLY SYMBOLIC THUS FAR AND IN NO WAY OFFERS ANY PRESENT CAPABILITY OF GAINING UN CONTROL. JONAH SAID UNIFIL COMMANDERS ARE INSTRUCTED NOT TO CHANCE CONFRONTATION WITH THE CHRISTIANS. THE UN INTENDS TO PURSUE DIPLOMATIC MEANS TO GET CHRISTIAN COOPERATION, AND TO THAT END COMMANDERS ARE ORDERED TO CONTINUE TRYING TO DEPLOY INTO THE SOUTHERN ZONE BUT TO GIVE WAY WHEN BLOCKED BY CHRISTIAN FORCES AND REPORT. JONAH SENT A MESSAGE TO ARAFAT ASKING HIM NOT TO DO OR SAY ANYTHING THAT WOULD UPSET THIS POLITICAL EFFORT, WHICH WILL REQUIRE MORE TIME. MEANWHILE THE UN IS BUILDING UP THE "FILE" OF REPORTS ON THE UNIFIL EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH ITS MANDATE IN THE CHRISTIAN AREAS.

ARAFAT WARNED THAT HE WANTS NO CHRISTIANS ATTEMPTING TO MOVE INTO MOSLEM VILLAGES. IF THEY CANNOT BE PREVENTED FROM DOING THAT, "SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN". ARAFAT SAID
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THOSE WHO WOULD MOVE SOUTH WOULD BE LEBANESE, NOT THE PLO, AND THEY WOULD DEFEND THE MOSLEMS VILLAGES.

5. JONAH SAID HE GAVE ALL OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION FREELY TO BOTH THE ISRAELIS AND TO HOSS AND BOUTROS. HOSS SAID HE COULD ONLY SEND THE LEBANESE ARMY SOUTH WHEN THE UN TAKES OVER THE CHRISTIAN AREA, BECAUSE HE DOES NOT HAVE A POLITICAL CONSENSUS IN BEIRUT TO CONFRONT THE CHRISTIANS. ASKED WHY THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD NOT MOVE UNDER SYRIAN PROTECTION INTO THE AREAS PRESENTLY CONTROLLED BY UNIFIL BATTALIONS AND LATER GRADUALLY WORK THEIR WAY SOUTH, JONAH SAID ONE REASON WAS BECAUSE THE LEBANESE MILITARY WOULD STILL HAVE TO MOVE THROUGH PLO-CONTROLLED TERRITORY NORTH OF THE LITANI. THE SYRIAN GUARANTEE GIVEN BY ASSAD TO SARKIS AT LATAKIA WAS CONDITIONAL ON THE GOL GETTING RID OF HADDAD IN SOME FASHION. JONAH UNDERLINED THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF HADDAD TO BOTH SIDES. HE REGRETTED THAT THE UN HAD BEEN "MANEUVERED" INTO ACCEPTING HADDAD AS A GOL COMMANDER.

6. LEONARD ASKED IF ANYTHING CAN BE DONE THROUGH THE ISRAELIS. JONAH SAID HE HAD BRIEFED RONN OF THE ISRAELI FOREIGN OFFICE FULLY, BUT HE DESPAIRS THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL DO ANYTHING TO BE HELPFUL. THEY REFUSE TO BELIEVE THE FACTS PROVIDED BY THE UN AND INSIST ON DISPENSING DISTORTED FIGURES AND IMPRESSIONS OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND. THERE ARE TWO POINTS OF VIEW CONTENDING WITHIN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, ONE (INCLUDING WEIZMAN) BACKED THE ORIGINAL ISRAELI INCURSION AND IS DETERMINED TO ENSURE THAT THE SITUATION AT LEAST REVERTS TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE BELLUM WITH THE GOOD FENCE AND OTHER FAVORABLE ARRANGEMENTS FOR ACCESS AND INFLUENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON; THE OTHER GROUP HAS BEEN
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CRITICAL OF THE WISDOM OF THE INCURSION FROM THE BEGINNING AND BELIEVES THAT ISRAEL MUST PULL OUT COMPLETELY.

7. JONAH SAID HE HAS CONCLUDED THAT IT WOULD BE WORSE FOR UNIFIL TO ATTEMPT TO DEPLOY INTO THE CHRISTIAN AREAS AND FAIL TO ESTABLISH ITS CONTROL, THAN NOT TO

DEPLOY AT ALL. THE ISRAELIS WILL COOPERATE ONLY ON
CONDITION THAT THE UN COMMIT ITSELF NOT TO DISARM OR
EVEN TO CONFINED THE CHRISTIANS TO CHRISTIAN VILLAGES,
AND THAT THE GOOD FENCE INCLUDING NEW GATES
BE KEPT OPEN -- BOTH IMPOSSIBLE CONDITIONS FROM THE
UN POINT OF VIEW. (THE OPENING OR CLOSING OF THE FENCE,
JONAH UNDERLINED, IS A GOL DECISION.) THEREFORE, UNDER
PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS BETTER FOR THE UN TO STAY
OUT OF THE CHRISTIAN AREAS. HE SAID ARAFAT HAS TACITLY
AGREED WITH THIS VIEW, AND IS WILLING TO ALLOW THE
UN TIME FOR ITS "DIPLOMATIC" EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A
RECORD OF EFFORTS TO ENTER THE CHRISTIAN AREAS FOR USE
IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL AT SOME POINT.

8. FOLLOWING HIS VISIT TO THE AREA, JONAH SAID HE
THINKS THE MOST LIKELY (AND DANGEROUS) SCENARIO IS
THAT THE PLO WILL IN A MATTER OF WEEKS LOSE PATIENCE
WITH THE UN'S FAILURE TO IMPLEMENT ITS FULL MANDATE, AND
PERHAPS THE CHRISTIANS WILL EVEN UNDERTAKE SOME MOVES
AGAINST ONE OR MORE MOSLEM VILLAGES. THE PLO WILL THEN
MOVE SOUTH, CREATE A CONFRONTATION WITH UNIFIL,
PRECIPITATE ITS BREAKUP AND CONTINUE SOUTH TO THE
FIGHT WITH THE CHRISTIANS, WHICH WILL MARK
THE START OF ALL-OUT WAR. WHILE HE IS PLEASED WITH THE
PERFORMANCE OF UNIFIL IN ITS PRESENT AREAS OF CONTROL
(JONAH SHOWED US A CABLE JUST RECEIVED FROM ERSKINE
REPORTING A LARGE CONFISCATION OF PALESTINIAN ARMS
AND MUNITIONS IN THE FIJI AREA), HE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT
A BREAKTHROUGH TO FULL CONTROL OF THE CHRISTIAN AREAS.

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9. TURNING TO PRESENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT, LEONARD WONDERED WHETHER ANY UN ACTION COULD HELP STABILIZE THE CURRENT MILITARY CONFLICT. HE ASKED JONAH WHETHER HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE TO GET THE SYRIANS -- OR SOME OTHER ARAB FORCE -- TO ESTABLISH CONTROL AROUND THE PERIPHERY OF BEIRUT CITY. THIS MILITARY RING WOULD SURROUND A SECOND, INNER RING CLOSER TO THE CITY'S MAIN SECTIONS WHERE A CEASE-FIRE WOULD BE ASSURED WHOLLY OR PARTLY BY A UN FORCE.

10. JONAH'S FIRST REACTION WAS THAT SUCH A PLAN WOULD REQUIRE TOO MANY UN TROOPS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE ARAB FORCE WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY IN ESTABLISHING A SECURITY PERIMETER ALL OF THE WAY AROUND THE CITY BECAUSE OF THE STRONG CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS TO THE NORTH. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, HOWEVER, HE SUGGESTED THAT LEBANESE MOSLEMS AND MANY ARABS ARE CONVINCED THAT THE PRESENT CONFLICT HAS BEEN PROVOKED BY THE CHRISTIANS PRECISELY IN ORDER TO GENERATE A PROPOSAL FOR UN INVOLVEMENT IN BEIRUT AND THE NORTH OF LEBANON. THEY BELIEVE THE CHRISTIANS EXPECT THAT IF THE UN

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ENTERS THE FRAY THE FRENCH WILL REPEAT THEIR HISTORICAL ROLE IN SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIANS. ANY PROPOSAL FOR UN ENTRY INTO THE BEIRUT PROBLEM, THEREFORE, WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE TAKEN BY ALL ARABS AS A PRO-CHRISTIAN MOVE AND BE REJECTED BY THEM.

11. JONAH SPECULATED, HOWEVER, THAT THE ARABS MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN SUCH A PLAN IF THEY COULD SEE SOME MAJOR GAIN FOR THEM IN A COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL. FOR EXAMPLE, IF AT THE SAME TIME THAT UN INVOLVEMENT IN BEIRUT WERE PROPOSED IT ALSO WERE SUGGESTED THAT THE UN WOULD MOVE DECISIVELY TO SOLVE THE CHRISTIAN PROBLEM IN THE SOUTH, JONAH COULD CONCEIVE OF SOME ARAB INTEREST IN THE IDEA. OTHERWISE, THE ARAB REACTION WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE TOTALLY NEGATIVE.

LEONARD

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